United Nations

Daily Highlights

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Representatives of Somali political movements to receive invitation to informal preparatory meeting in Addis Ababa on 4 January, under chairmanship of Secretary-General, to consider arrangements for national reconciliation conference.

+ Many of world's 300 million indigenous people face social and economic disadvantage and human rights violations, says Secretary-General, inaugurating International Year for World's Indigenous People; appeals for contributions to new Voluntary Fund to assist indigenous people.

+ Secretary-General's Special Envoy, concluding mission to South Africa, says it is time for parties to renounce violence and to negotiate.

+ Issue of foreign residents and immigrants raised today by Secretary-General's Special Representative for Cambodia, Yasushi Akashi, at working session of Supreme National Council under his Chairmanship.

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The leaders of the Somali political movements are to be invited by the Secretary-General to attend an informal preparatory meeting at the headquarters of the Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa on 4 January, under the auspices of the United Nations, to make arrangements for a national reconciliation conference. According to a United Nations spokesman, the list of participants has not yet been finalized, but it will include the nine political movements that have been invited to earlier meetings in Addis Ababa.

The Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia, Ismat Kittani, according to the spokesman, today informed two Somali leaders, General Aidid and Ali Mahdi, that they would be receiving invitations to attend the meeting within the next two days. He said Mr. Kittani had held talks today with both General Aidid and Ali Mahdi, and that he would be attending a meeting at the United States embassy in Mogadishu tomorrow with the two leaders and the United States Ambassador to Somalia.

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At his meetings today, Mr. Kittani gave the two Somali leaders information on the division of labour in the operation authorized by the Security Council. He pointed out that the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM), under his leadership, would remain fully responsible for political and humanitarian assistance, while the Unified Task Force was in charge of securing delivery of that assistance. Once that was accomplished, the military command would also be turned over to the United Nations, Mr. Kittani said.

The spokesman emphasized that there was very good coordination between the United Nations and the Unified Task Force, both at Headquarters in New York and on the ground in Mogadishu.

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It was no coincidence that the United Nations was launching 1993 as International Year of the World's Indigenous People today, Human Rights Day, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali told the General Assembly at this morning's inaugural ceremony for the Year. Many of the 300 million indigenous people in the world faced social and economic disadvantage in the societies in which they lived, he said, and some of the worst violations of human rights had been perpetrated against them.

"Today indigenous people are often among the poorest, worst housed and least paid," he continued. "They usually have less access to education and welfare than other members of society."

A welcome change was taking place at national and international levels, he said. Many indigenous people had formed their own organizations and were active in seeking improvements in their condition. It was important that this Year should see the situation of indigenous people brought into centre-stage as a subject for public awareness and debate. The really crucial role of the United Nations, he stressed, was to promote and protect their human rights.

The Secretary-General opened a Voluntary Fund for the International Year, to provide resources for practical assistance to indigenous people. He appealed to all Governments, non-governmental organizations and other institutions and individuals to contribute.

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Ambassador Tom Vraalsen, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy to South Africa, yesterday concluded his 17-day mission and returned to New York to present his report to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

In a statement to the press before his departure, Ambassador Vraalsen said the increased momentum towards multiparty talks, which South Africa had witnessed in the last two weeks, was a hopeful sign. However, he noted, there had also been recent developments which threatened to disrupt this forward momentum. He expressed the belief that time had come for "all parties in

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South Africa to renounce violence and come to the negotiating table". He appealed to all parties to refrain from actions which would complicate the process.

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The issue of foreign residents and immigrants was raised by the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Cambodia, Yasushi Akashi, today at a working session of the Supreme National Council under his Chairmanship.

According to the Spokesman of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), Mr. Akashi had proposed draft terms of reference for a Technical Advisory Committee on the matter, saying that it should be "objectively and impartially researched in order to facilitate the task of a future Cambodian government developing long-term policy in that regard".

Mr. Akashi had also presented a report on the operations of the Strategic Teams on the investigation of the presence of foreign forces in Cambodia, indicating that "every single one of these investigations, to which UNTAC has devoted considerable time and manpower, has been inconclusive". Reaffirming UNTAC's commitment to the national independence of Cambodia, he said he could not "accept allegations that UNTAC is not doing enough to investigate the presence of foreign forces".

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